

GEN

✓



1807

1927

120TH ANNIVERSARY

of the

FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*The Church with a Warm
Heart and a Glad Hand*

East Commerce and Church Streets, Bridgeton, New Jersey

REV. HOWARD NORTON AMER, Pastor
271 East Commerce Street
Parsonage Telephone, Bridgeton 922

HOURS OF SERVICE

Sunday

10.30 A. M., and 7.30 P. M., Preaching Services

2.30 Sunday School

6.45 Epworth League Devotional Service

Prayer Meeting

Wednesday - - - 7.45 P. M.

Class Meeting

Friday Evening - - 7.45 P. M.

Every seat free at every service. Visitors always welcome.
If you have no church home we invite you to come with us.

GENEALOGY
974.902
B76FA

Allen County Public Library
900 Webster Street
PO Box 2270
Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270

Pastoral Greeting

Dear Friends and Fellow-workers:

It is with profound pleasure that I greet you and wish for all of our large membership and wide host of friends all the success and prosperity that can possibly come to mortal beings.

"The church is the household of faith, the body of which Christ is the head." Again the church is often spoken of as a lighthouse, haven, refuge and the greatest agency for the civilization of the world. In fact, the church will do more for man than he with his weak mind can conceive. But after all the church can only reach men and do great things for us as we come within its reach.

The world is seeking for all the help it can get for all conditions in life and how much more can success be satisfied in living and service when the needy one comes within the reach of the outstretched arms of the church and its various branches.

May we emphasize the importance of uniting strength and weakness so that strength will overwhelm all else and make life the real force and power it can be with the Divine power so freely offered through the ministry and work of the church.

The church cannot live without folks, neither can folks live and really succeed without the church. May I then appeal to you and yours for a keener interest in the church and its various activities that you will affiliate yourself with and be active in the progress of the great task that God has entrusted with us.

You should have a church home and if you have no place to call your own then we welcome you with us and assure you of our best in every way.

Yours very sincerely,

HOWARD N. AMER,

Pastor.

In Memoriam

Certainly the First M. E. Church has been highly honored by God in the splendid type of men that have served as its pastors. Many of these noble men have entered into their reward while others await the summons to the Heavenly country. They have left their labor but the work so well done speaks in tenderest language of the laborer.

Those self sacrificing and ever faithful local preachers, too. How the work was started by them and all through the years in shadow and sunshine they have been at their post.

The fact that we have our church today, so well preserved and organized, speaks in loudest praise for those who have borne the heat of the day in the Official ranks.

How devoted and loyal has been the membership of the church both in presence and their purse.

Everywhere in the history of the church we hear of those fine folks that have had such kindly feelings toward the work and the worker.

We reverently and sincerely pause at this point of our history and thank God for all the great and noble characters that have left us the rich inheritance we have in the church. They have served the cause here and we have the fruit of their labor.

As these memories are fragrant and blessed to us and as we are left to carry forward the great work may we be faithful to each task until we too, are called to our reward in Heaven.

Very sincerely,

HOWARD N. AMER,

Pastor.



Through an oversight the above picture was omitted from the pages of this pamphlet. It is the present First M. E. Church

The picture on page 3 is the original church building and was removed to the corner of Bank and Washington streets, where it now stands, and has been known as the Bank Street Chapel, to make way for the present church building



FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
East Commerce and Church Streets, Bridgeton, N. J.

120th Anniversary Program

The following is a complete program for the 120th, Anniversary of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Bridgeton.

Thursday, September 22 at 8 P. M. A Constituency Social. A feat of good cheer, good music and refreshments. No admission, no offering, but just a smile admits each and all of our Constituency.

Sunday, September 25, 10.30, Veterans Day Service with Anniversary sermon by pastor. 2.30 Rally Day and Promotion exercises in Sunday school. 7.30 P. M., a sermon by the pastor. **Thought, Leadership and Success** for a **Greater Church** of tomorrow.

Sunday, October 2, Fraternal Sunday. All fraternal and secret societies of the city invited to send delegations at either or both services. Special sermons by the pastor.

Sunday, October 9, Ladies' and Young Peoples' Day. 10.30 A. M., Service in honor of the ladies. 7.30 P. M., service in honor of the young people of the church and Constituency. Mrs. Major Abbie Niederbuehl, of Newark, N. J., will preach at both services.

Sunday, October 16, Opening of Father and Son Week. 10.30 A. M., Sermon by the pastor. 7.30 P. M., Address by Prof. Chester Robbins, Superintendent of Bridgeton Schools.

Tuesday, October 18, 7.45 P. M., Father and Son Social Night in the Library Annex. Good speaking, fine musical program and refreshments. For further information and tickets see Mr. Jerome Young, Chairman of Committee.

Sunday, October 23, Sons Day. 10.30 A. M., Sermon by the pastor. 7.30 P. M., Address by Rev. John Cowan.

Wednesday, October 26 at 7.45 P. M. Union Prayer Meeting in charge of Rev. John T. Hackett, President of Bridgeton Ministerial Union, assisted by ministers of the Bridgeton Churches. Members and friends of the churches of Bridgeton are most cordially invited.

Friday, October 28 at 7.45, Union Class Meeting. In charge of Mr. Clarence Carson, class leader, in our church. Leaders and classes from all the churches in and near Bridgeton are most cordially invited. It is desired to make this a really old-time class meeting.

Sunday, October 30, Temperance Day, also the Tenth Anniversary of the Closing of the Deerfield Hotel. 10.30, special sermon by the pastor. 2.30, special temperance program in the Sunday school, in charge of Mrs. Samuel Hartley. 7.30, address by the pastor, subject, **The Baby and the Bottle.** All members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Cumberland County and surrounding country are especially invited to either or both services. Also address by Mr. Rowland Monroe, Attorney for the New Jersey Anti-Saloon League, and Attorney for the successful temperance forces in the Deerfield Hotel fight.

Monday, October 31, 7.45 P. M., Organization Night. Preaching by Rev. Carlton Van Hook, D. D., Pastor of First Methodist Episcopal Church, Collingswood, N. J. Each organization of the Church is cordially invited and the president or Superintendent of each organization is the Booster Committee for the night.

Tuesday, November 1, at 7.45 P. M., Musical Night. Preaching by Rev. B. Harrison Decker, Pastor of First Methodist Episcopal Church, Mount Holly, N. J. Special musical features.

Wednesday, November 2, 7.45 P. M., Men's Night. Preaching by Rev. Charles Elder, Chaplain New Jersey State Prison, Trenton, and former pastor of this church. All men are urged to avail themselves of this opportunity to hear and shake hands with their old-time friend.

Thursday, November 3, 7.45 P. M., Official Board Night. Preaching by Rev. John W. Stokes, Pastor First Methodist Episcopal Church, Williamstown, N. J. All of the present officials members and those who have been in the past are especially invited.

Friday, November 4, 7.45 P. M., Old-Home Night. Preaching by Rev. Harold Paul Sloan, D. D., Pastor of the Haddonfield Methodist Episcopal Church, also National

President **Methodist League for Faith and Life**. All of the the old-time members and friends of this **Mother of Bridgeton Methodism** are cordially invited.

Sunday, November 6, Local Preachers Day, also an All-Day Service. 10.30 A. M., Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the pastor will be assisted by ordained local preachers and others. There will also be reception of members. 2.30 P. M., Sunday school. 4.00 P. M., Pentecostal service, in charge of local preachers. 6.45 P. M., Epworth League devotional meeting, with special speaker. 7.30 P. M., preaching service, followed by evangelistic service.

Following these services each night the evangelistic services will begin with good old time preaching by able preachers and Mrs. Major Abbie Niederbuehl, well known and successful evangelist assisting. Watch and listen for more detailed announcement.

Throughout the entire Anniversary Service there will be special music both vocal and instrumental, in charge of W. L. Evans.

Everybody welcome at every service.

All former pastors and those who have entered the ministry from our church are invited to spend any time with us in the Anniversary Services possible. We will endeavor to arrange for their entertainment if desired. Or, we shall appreciate a word of greeting which will be read sometime during the services. Please send all letters of greeting to Rev. Charles Stevenson, East Commerce Street, Bridgeton, N. J.

The pastor deeply appreciates the splendid co-operation of the Anniversary Committee which consists of Ralph Parvin, E. A. Loper, and Allen Willborne. Also the same appreciation is felt for all who have co-operated in any way to make this a great season for the church.

Historical Sketch

First Methodist Episcopal Church, Bridgeton, N. J.

Arranged by Rev. Howard N. Amer, Pastor

We are not attempting in the following paragraphs to give a complete history of the church but rather to take out of the great past of this church some of the high spots and arrange them for our friends. It is not to be understood that in the omission of great revivals that there have been no such activities but rather that the entire history has been to a very large extent a great revival effort and from which many hundreds, if not thousands, have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. The evangelistic fervor has been, as it were, a thread throughout the entire history and therefor cannot be overlooked though no mention may be made in this connection.

The abundance of splendid material for this sketch has made the work of arrangement somewhat difficult. We have however endeavored to be careful in selecting the high spots of the history and place them as accurately before our readers as possible.

Certainly God has honored Bridgeton Methodism by entrusting the work in the hands of such a fine array of noble and courageous a group of ministers as are found on the list of those who have served this church. Each one has had his place in making the work the success that has come. From these ranks have been handed to the world and general religious activities a type of manhood that has been an honor to the work. Time and space will not permit in this connection the enumerating of any of the achievements of these splendid men except in a general way. Certainly the work speaks of the devotion and unselfish service to the tasks committed and we pause to thank God for these faithful laborers.

The Methodist movement had not reached its half century milestone in the world when Francis Asbury found his way into Bridgeton and in his own way preached the old Gospel with such power that his trail behind him was

ablaze for God and had its effect upon the sparsely settled section hereabouts. Though there seems to be several years after his visit in which we have little record of any great movements along this line, yet we are inclined to believe that the words and life of that noble pioneer preacher had left its mark. In 1804 the work seems to take more definite form and is spoken of as being a part of the Salem Circuit which included all the churches in Salem and Cumberland Counties. Much credit is due Rev. John Murphy and Michael Swing, early local preachers, for the splendid part they had in the beginnings of Methodism in this section. These were faithful to their trust to the end and closed their earthly activities with the satisfaction that they had finished their work. These both are resting in the present Commerce street church yard awaiting the general resurrection day.

In the fall of 1807 the society here seems to have taken on an organized form and at that time elected its first board of trustees. The membership though small, there being but fourteen members, was looking for the betterment of the work and therefor sent its first delegation to the quarterly meeting of the Salem and Cumberland circuit and paid for the first time their share of the support of the ministry, which was eighty-seven cents. The amount of their contribution may seem in these days but a pittance, but to those loyal folks it represented sacrifice and sincerity to the utmost.

In these early days much annoyance was experienced by the faithful dispensers of the word of God by lawless youths but when these were brought up for trial there cases were dismissed with statements that seemed to reflect upon this new church. Those in charge were not to be stopped even by this discourtesy but pressed on through the fires and never ceased preaching and leading men to God. Methodism had no standing among the churches and was looked upon as an experiment and would soon fall, but how sadly have all these predictions and feelings failed.

Soon after the apparent organizing of the church it was decided to build a house of worship. This was a plain frame structure and was 30x36 feet. The frame was sawed

in the mill of one of its members and for many years the church remained unfinished not even was it plastered and had no regular sexton, in fact candles were donated for the lighting. At the first quarterly meeting held here the last of the debt was raised and paid. This being in 1833 and the amount of the debt was \$15.50. In 1834 this frame church was moved to the corner of Bank and Washington streets and a new church was built. The Bank street chapel was then fitted up and used for Sunday school and prayer meeting purposes. In the latter part of the year 1917 this chapel building was sold to the Board of Education of the city of Bridgeton and is used for school purposes.

The new building above referred to was built of brick and was remodeled and improved as conditions made same necessary but the general plan of the building remained the same.

Faithfulness in attending the various means of grace and promptness were emphasized and the letter of the law of the church was strictly observed. These suggestions from the past would be profitable to be passed to our people, not only in our own denomination but to the church in general.

In 1823 this society was set aside as a station under the pastorate of Rev. Charles Pitman, with a membership of 75. Under the pastorate of this great man of God much good was accomplished and a new future opened.

In 1827 Mrs. Phoebe Sayre died and left a house for a parsonage, which was a very splendid gift and showed the deep interest that this very splendid lady had toward the church and the comfort of its minister. In 1850 a new and comfortable parsonage was built on the south side of Commerce street, west of the cemetery, in 1886 the parsonage adjoining the cemetery was sold and the property was purchased on the corner of Church and Commerce streets, this is the present parsonage.

Beginning about 1837 there were three controversies arose one after another and seemed for a time to threaten the best interests of the church. The first disturbing condition was caused by the introduction of song books with

music in them, following soon after this was the introduction of kneeling cushions, but in both cases these disappeared mysteriously but were soon discovered. Then came the introduction of a choir, this was soon found to be a value and it was not long before the storm was past and the peace and harmony that was natural here was established.

In 1842 the records show a membership of 460 with



PARSONAGE, FIRST M. E. CHURCH
(Fence removed some years ago)

14 class meetings, one meeting at Roadstown and one at Dutch Neck. These figures indicate within themselves that the work is growing for in nineteen years the membership had increased 385.

The New Jersey Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met in Commerce Street Church three times, in 1838 with Bishop Hedding presiding, 1853 with Bishop Morris presiding, and in 1886 with Bishop Hirst presiding. At each of these sessions there were many sent forth into the Christian ministry who have proven that there was

no mistake in there being sent out. In addition these sessions were marked with power and souls were saved and the work here built up in a noble and lasting manner.

In 1866 the first organs were placed in the church. These were then the popular cabinet organs. As the years passed and conditions changed it was but natural with the remodeled interior of the church that a newer musical in-



INTERIOR OF FIRST M. E. CHURCH

strument was needed so in 1905 a fine new pipe organ was placed in the church.

In the year 1849 the Trinity M. E. Church became a society and was located on Fayette street and in the year 1865 Central M. E. Church was organized, both of these were the off spring of the old mother church.

The first regularly organized Sunday School was started in the year 1825 by Mr. George Harris in his own church. This is called the first Sunday School because it was the first organization to have the backing of the church and the interest and support of the pastor. This work proved its value to the work of the church.

In the early part of 1909 an individual Communion service was introduced and purchased and seems to have been paid for by popular subscription. This service is still in use and is very satisfactory. It seems that this was among the first Communion services of this type that was used in this city.

The World War seems to have affected all branches of the activities in general and the church was no exception. The workers were just as sincere but the terrible gloom overshadowed all and naturally prevented many matters from going as had been hoped. But while the church was affected yet it had its place in providing the where-with all to protect the principles of right. Fourteen of our splendid men were in their country's service and we are grateful to note that all the men returned to their homes safely though one has died since. Thus this church did its best to help.

In the early part of October 1921 it was decided, after due and careful consideration, to change the name of the church from the Commerce Street Methodist Episcopal Church to the First Methodist Episcopal Church. This action seems to have been fitting since this was the first church of this denomination in the city and was rightly called the Mother of Methodism. It is somewhat difficult for those who were familiar with the old name to forget it hence it is often heard.

With the original deed there seems to be a section of the grave yard included but there also seems to have been two other additions that combine in making up the present cemetery plot.

There is perhaps no part of the property that is so tenderly thought about, for here lays the bodies of those who were so active in the early activities of the church, religious work, and national affairs. May we call attention to the fact that here lie ninety soldiers. Among these are two who fought in the Revolutionary War and one who stood for his country in the recent World War with nearly every war in our national history represented. There are graves that mark the last earthly resting place of ministers and laymen who were active in those days of the past.

For over a century the cemetery had no systematic

care except as many of the lot owners had their individual lots cared for. In 1924 the yard had become so overgrown with vegetation of all kinds that it was decided to clean same up and a plan was adopted by which the yard could be placed under perpetual care. Mr. George W. Adcock was employed as superintendent and entered into contract and co-operated with the cemetery committee of the board of trustees of the church and after long and determined effort the yard was put into a more respectable and gratifying condition.

The perpetual care plan was carefully arranged and seems to solve the problem of future care if lot owners will act favorably. The plan is in brief, that each lot owner will give a sum of \$100, which will be placed in a trust fund under the care of the Cumberland Trust Co., of this city and the interest from same will perpetually care for the lots. The principal cannot be used but remains untouched. About 18 or 20 lots are now under perpetual care and it is believed with each lot owner entering the plan the yard will remain the lawn-like resting place of those so close to many hearts.

In 1927 a modern and efficient power lawn mower was purchased and same will be used in keeping the yard in fine shape.

Much credit is due Mr. G. W. Adcock for the present fine appearance of the old church yard and it is a credit to the church and those who are interested therein.

The original wood picket fence in front of the grave yard in earlier days was replaced by an attractive and durable iron fence some few years ago, the exact year is not known by the writer.

For several years there has been an increasing demand for additional accommodations for our growing Sunday school. At first it was suggested to erect a modern Sunday School Temple but during the war prices soared so high that this seemed out of the question. A temporary arrangement was made for the beginners, primary and junior departments. But with these outgrown and the school in general increasing in organization and numbers it seems that the demand must be recognized.

The latter part of April 1927 at the First Quarterly Conference the matter was suggested to care for these conditions that session adjourned to meet at a later date and the entire congregation be invited to discuss same. The adjourned session with the congregational meeting was called on May 24, same year, with District Superintendent J. B. Kulp, presiding. The congregation unanimously voted to request the Quarterly Conference to take such steps as were necessary looking toward the early erection of the temple. The congregational meeting adjourned and the Quarterly Conference went into session and as a result the recommendation from the congregation was accepted and necessary committees were elected and arrangements in general made. On Sunday, June 5, 1927, the plan of raising funds was presented to the church at all services with very gratifying results.

The work has been so well cared for by the committees that their minds are looking more actively in the direction of plans, architects and materials.

The Cumberland County W. C. T. U. held its Annual Convention in this church on September 28, 1927, and seems to have been the first of any kind of convention held in the church except the New Jersey Conference of the M. E. Church.

The 120th, anniversary, now being observed, seeks to touch every phase of the work and bear in mind the workers of the past and present as also to plan and prepare the workers of tomorrow for their place and task. Through the kindness of Mrs. Homan, of Rio Grand, N. J., a former resident of this city, we were permitted to have on exhibition the original baptism font, from which many of our mothers and fathers of the church were baptised.

The anniversary plan will lead up to and we pray will result in the conversion of a great throng of folks. The aim to preserve the memories of the earlier days will be continued here and the meetings conducted on the old lines and the old and ever reliable doctrines preached.

The Ladies Aid Society has installed a modern electric lighting system in the parsonage while the trustees have

placed a modern boiler and additional help for the comfort of the pastor and family at the parsonage.

There are so many items in the past and so much coming all the time that it seems hard to stop our pen. But may it be said that this has been and will ever remain a really progressive and wide-awake church and thoroughly evangelistic in every department.

Pastors

The following is a complete list of pastors with the date of their appointment as recorded on church record:

- 1807 William Mills and William Smith.
- 1808 John Stevens and Nathan Swain.
- 1809 James Moore and William Fisher.
- 1810 William Fox and Joseph Bennet.
- 1811 William Smith and Daniel Ireland.
- 1812 Daniel Ireland and William Leonard.
- 1813 Samuel Budd and John Fox.
- 1814 William Fisher and Amos C. Moore.
- 1815 Peter Vannest and George Woolery.
- 1816 George Woolery and John Creamer.
- 1817 John Walker and John Creamer.
- 1818 John Walker and Edward Page.
- 1819 Thomas Neal and Edward Page.
- 1820 Thomas Ware and Thomas Neal.
- 1821 Thomas Ware and Samuel Cox.
- 1822 Edward White and James Aikins.
- 1823 Commerce Street set off as a station.
Charles Pitman.
- 1825 Walter Burroughs.
- 1826 John Potts.
- 1828 James Smith.
- 1829 Robert Gerry.
- 1831 William A. Wiggins.
- 1833 Barthlomew Weed.
- 1835 Thomas McCarrall.
- 1837 Abraham Owen.

- 1838 Thomas Sovereign.
- 1840 J. L. Lenhart.
- 1842 J. H. Dandy.
- 1844 Jefferson Lewis.
- 1845 William Handey.
- 1848 Bartholomew Weed.
- 1850 A. C. Vandewater.
- 1852 John Swain.
- 1854 N. Vansant.
- 1856 Philip Cline.
- 1858 Charles E. Hill.
- 1860 J. B. Dobbins.
- 1862 C. H. Whitecar.
- 1863 John Hickman.
- 1865 A. E. Ballard.
- 1867 F. A. Morrell.
- 1870 Isaiah B. King.
- 1873 C. S. Vancleve.
- 1875 Charles E. Hill.
- 1877 William Walton.
- 1881 Jessie Stiles.
- 1884 Willis Reeves.
- 1887 George S. Stanger.
- 1890 Peter Provost.
- 1893 S. W. Lake.
- 1897 Charles H. Elder.
- 1900 Annias Lawrence.
- 1903 James D. Bills.
- 1906 Pennington Corson, Sr.
- 1907 R. B. Stephenson.
- 1909 James Burns.
- 1911 Edward Mount.
- 1914 F. L. Jewett.
- 1918 J. J. Messler.
- 1921 Samuel Sargent.
- 1922 Ralph S. Carlisle.
- 1924 J. L. Surtees.
- 1925 John R. Read.
- 1927 Howard N. Amer.

THE PIONEER PRESS, INC.
Bridgeton, N. J.

HECKMAN
BINDERY, INC.
Bound-To-Pleas®

JAN 04

N. MANCHESTER, INDIANA 46562

